

Message Text

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJ: DIET DISSOLUTION PROSPECTS

SUMMARY. SPECULATION OVER THE TIMING OF A LOWER HOUSE DISSOLUTION AND GNERAL ELECTION FLARED UP AGAIN LAST WEEK AS A RESULT OF A POINTED STATEMENT BY PRIMIN MIKI. A GENERAL ELECTION MUST BEHELD BEFORE DECEMBER 7, 1976, BUT THREE EARLIER POSSIBILITIES -- DECEMBER, JANUARY OR MAY -- SEEM MORE LIKELY. THERE ARE CONVINCING ARGUMENTS FOR "EARLY" OR "LATER" ELECTIONS, BUT WE NOW BELIEVE PROSPECTS ARE BEST FOR LOWER HOUSE DISSOLUTION IN DECEMBER AND ELECTION IN JANUARY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE QUESTION OF THE DISSOLUTION OF THE LOWER HOUSE AND THE CALLING OF A GENERAL ELECTION FLARED UP AGAIN LAST WEEK AS A RESULT OF APOINTED STATEMENT BY PRIMIN MIKE DESCRIBING THE ROLE OF ELECTIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. THIS REFERENCE WAS WIDELY INTERPRETED AS A HINT THAT HE WAS MOVING TOWARD A DIET DISSOLUTION AND GENERAL ELECTION SOME-
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TIME SOON. IN SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS, MIKI AGAIN DENIED THAT

HE WAS CONSIDERING A DISSOLUTION, AND LDP SEC-GEN NAKASONE ALSO WEIGHED IN, BUT FEW OBSERVERS HAVE BEEN CONVINCED THAT THERE HAS NOT BEEN A SLIGHT SHIFT IN MIKI'S POSITION.

2. ELECTION POSSIBILITIES. A GENERAL ELECTION MUST BE HELD BEFORE THE EXPIRATION OF THE CURRENT LOWER HOUSE TERM OF OFFICE ON DECEMBER 7, 1976. IN OUR JUDGEMENT, THREE POSSIBILITIES APPEAR REASONABLE FOR A LOWER HOUSE DISSOLUTION AND GENERAL (LOWER HOUSE) ELECTION (WHICH MUST BE HELD WITHIN 40 DAYS OF DISSOLUTION): (A) NOVEMBER DISSOLUTION DURING THE PRESENT EXTRAORDINARY SESSION WITH LOWER HOUSE ELECTION IN DECEMBER: (B) DECEMBER DISSOLUTION AFTER THE OPENING OF THE REGULAR DIET SESSION IN DECEMBER WITH ELECTION IN JANUARY 1977: (C) APRIL DISSOLUTION AFTER DIET PASSAGE OF THE FY 77 BUDGET WITH ELECTION IN MAY 1977. WE BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD MUCH LATER BECAUSE, AS THE DECEMBER 1976 DEADLINE NEARS, MIKI AND THE LDP LOSE FLEXIBILITY IN COPING WITH POSSIBLE ADVERSE DEVELOPMENTS BEYOND THEIR CONTROL (E.G., ECONOMIC CONDITIONS).

3. THE ARGUMENTS. THERE ARE IMPORTANT FACTORS THAT SUGGEST AN ELECTION MAY BE "EARLY" (DECEMBER -JANUARY). (A) MIKI, HIMSELF, IS ANXIOUS TO HAVE HIS PARTY LEADERSHIP CONFIRMED--AND HIS CONSIDERABLE DEBT TO SHIINA (WHO BROUGHT HIM TO POWER) REDUCED. HE PROBABLY BELIEVES HIS IMAGE WOULD BE ENHANCED BY PARTICIPATION IN THE MID-NOVEMBER SIX-POWER ECONOMIC SUMMIT AND HE WOULD WISH TO CAPITALIZE ON THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER. (B) AN ELECTION MOOD IS BUILDING, FUELED BY OPPOSITION PARTY STATEMENTS AND MEDIA SPECULATION. MANY YOUNGER LDP DIETMEN AND NEW LDP CANDIDATES ARE ALREADY SPENDING LIMITED CAMPAIGN FUNDS UNDER THE ASSUMPTION THAT AN ELECTION WILL BE HELD WITHIN THE YEAR. THEY ARE NOT CONFIDENT THEIR FINANCIAL RESOURCES WILL LAST FOR LONG AND ARE CLAMOURING FOR AN ELECTION AT AN EARLY DATE. INCUMBENTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE MADE NERVOUS BY THE SPENDING AND ARE ENCOURAGED TO CAMPAIGN SERIOUSLY THEMSELVES. (C) IF THE CURRENT DIET DIFFICULTIES SHOULD PROVE TO BE PROLONGED, DISSOLUTION--PROBABLY IN NOVEMBER--AND A GENERAL ELECTION (DECEMBER) WOULD BE THE OBVIOUS VEHICLE FOR BREAKING THE STALEMATE AND REAFFIRMING THE LDP MANDATE. CONFIDENTIAL

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(D) THE NEW ELECTION FUNDS CONTROL LAW, WHICH BECOMES EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, WILL MAKE LDP FUND RAISING MORE DIFFICULT. (E) A YEAR-END OR JANUARY ELECTION COULD SAVE PARTY TREASURIES SUBSTANTIAL SUMS BY ALLOWING CANDIDATES TO COMBINE TRADITIONAL YEAR-END PRESENTS WITH ELECTION "GIFTS"

4. THERE ARE ALSO GOOD REASONS TO EXPECT AN ELECTION MIGHT BE "LATER." (A) ALL OF THE IMPORTANT LDP LEADERS EXCEPT

MIKI AND POSSIBLY NAKASONE -- TANAKA, SHIINA, OHIRA, AND FUKUDA -- ARE REPORTEDLY STRONGLY OPPOSED TO "EARLY" ELECTIONS FOR A VARIETY OF PERSONAL AND FACTIONAL REASONS. SOME HAVE EVEN SUGGESTED THAT AN ELECTION SHOULD NOT BE HELD UNTIL NEAR THE END OF THE PRESENT LOWER HOUSE TERM. (B) WITHOUT AT LEAST THE EXPECTATION OF AN ECONOMIC UPSWING, AN ELECTION WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE LDP. SUCH AN EXPECTATION COULD CONCEIVABLY COME IN DECEMBER WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET, BUT ACTUAL RECOVERY IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE MUCH FURTHER OFF. (C) THE LDP IS CURRENTLY DEEP IN DEBT -- PARTY HEADQUARTERS IS MORTGAGED -- AND SERIOUS FUND RAISING EFFORTS APPEAR TO BE JUST GETTING UNDER WAY.

5. WHILE THE POSSIBILITY OF EITHER "EARLY" (DECEMBER) OR "LATER" (APRIL) ELECTIONS CANNOT BE RULED OUT, CONSIDERATION OF ALL THE RELEVANT FACTORS SEEMS TO US TO POINT TOWARD DECEMBER DISSOLUTION/JANUARY ELECTION AS THE OPTIMUM TIMING TO SATISFY ALL. MOREOVER, OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS TEND TO CONFIRM THAT JANUARY ELECTIONS SEEM INCREASINGLY LIKELY. THE TWO FACTORS BEYOND MIKI'S CONTROL -- DIET STALEMATE AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS -- WOULD NOT RULE THIS OUT. HIS LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM STILL STANDS A GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCESS IN THE DIET AND HE WILL PROBABLY NOT BE FORCED TO DISSOLVE THE LOWER HOUSE DURING THIS SESSION BECAUSE OF DIET DIFFICULTIES. THERE IS ALSO CONSIDERABLE DOUBT CURRENTLY THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WILL IMPROVE SUFFICIENTLY BY NEXT SPRING TO MAKE WAITING UNTIL THEN MORE ATTRACTIVE TO THE LDP. IN THIS SITUATION, THE LDP LEADERSHIP MAY WELL CONCLUDE THAT A JANUARY ELECTION FOLLOWING PASSAGE OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET AND EXPECTATIONS OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY, HOWEVER TENUOUS, WOULD BE BETTER THAN POSTPONING TO AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE. CONFIDENTIAL

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